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Official Records

Disarmament Commission

192nd Meeting
Thursday, 13 April 1995, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Erdenechuluun . . . . . (Mongolia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: At the outset, I should like to express my sincere thanks to all delegations for electing me Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for 1995. I consider this a great honour for me and for my country.

As members may recall, the Disarmament Commission held its annual organizational session on 1 December 1994 to consider matters relating to the 1995 substantive session. However, because of divergent views on issues relating to the provisional agenda and the dates and duration of the session, as well as the ongoing nomination of candidates to the posts on the 1995 Bureau by certain regional groups, the Commission decided to suspend the session until a later date. During the past months, a number of informal consultations have been held on those issues. Today, I am pleased to report that the Commission is in a position to consider those pending issues.

Election of officers

The Chairman: As members may recall, at our organizational session held on 1 December 1994 the Disarmament Commission elected its Chairman and three Vice-Chairmen for the year 1995. During the past months, the nomination of candidates for the other five vice-chairmanships and for the rapporteurship has been the subject of consultations within the regional groups concerned.

Now I am pleased to inform the Commission that the following regional groups have nominated their candidates for Vice-Chairman of the Commission for 1995: the African Group has nominated South Africa, and the Latin American and Caribbean Group has nominated Colombia and Uruguay.

However, to date the Group of Eastern European States has not nominated the candidates for its two vice-chairmanships. I hope that Group will expedite its nomination process.

If I hear no comment, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect by acclamation the representatives of the countries I mentioned as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission for 1995.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I should like now to proceed to the election of the Rapporteur of the Commission for 1995. The candidate for that post should come from the Group of African States. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that the Group has nominated Mr. Alaa Issa of Egypt to the post of Rapporteur of the Commission for 1995.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect by acclamation Mr. Alaa Issa of Egypt as Rapporteur of the Disarmament Commission for 1995.

It was so decided.

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The Chairman: I wish to extend my warm congratulations to all the Vice-Chairmen elected, and to Mr. Issa of Egypt on his election as Rapporteur of the Commission. I am sure that he will make an important contribution to the work of the Commission in 1995.

I call now on the Rapporteur, who wishes to address the Commission.

Mr. Issa (Egypt), Rapporteur of the Commission on Disarmament: I wish to express my sincere appreciation for the great honour of being nominated by the African Group and elected by the Disarmament Commission as its Rapporteur for the 1995 session. I should like to take this opportunity to assure you, Mr. Chairman, of my fullest cooperation in bringing the work of our 1995 session to a successful conclusion.

The Chairman: I should like to assure the Rapporteur that I am ready and willing to cooperate very closely with him during the coming weeks.

Draft provisional agenda for the 1995 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission

The Chairman: As members may recall, the Disarmament Commission adopted a three-item phased approach in 1993, and it has been the overwhelming view of the Member States that such a decision of the Commission should be duly respected when we consider the question of the provisional agenda for the 1995 session.

At its meeting held on 23 November 1994, the Bureau unanimously recommended that in the light of the conclusion of the item on science and technology there should be a new third item for 1995. However, at the last plenary meeting of the Commission, held on 1 December 1994, divergent views were expressed on this issue. At the last consultation meeting, held on 7 December 1994, it was the overwhelming view that the third item should be "Review of the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade", particularly in view of the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 49/75 B, entitled "Review of the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade", which requests the Disarmament Commission to include this subject as an item on the agenda of the Commission's 1995 session.

As a result of intensive consultations during recent months on the issue of including a third item on the agenda of the 1995 session of the Commission, I am pleased to report that consensus has been reached on this issue, as reflected in the revised draft provisional agenda, contained in document A/CN.10/1994/CRP.6/Rev.1. However, the understanding is that in 1995, item 6, entitled "Review of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade", will be concluded, as was the case in 1985.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Disarmament Commission to approve the provisional agenda of the 1995 substantive session, as contained in document A/CN.10/1994/CRP.6/Rev.1.

It was so decided.

Organizational matters

The Chairman: This item relates to the establishment of subsidiary bodies, the appointment of their chairmen and the adoption of dates, duration and the programme of work for the 1995 substantive session.

Since the Disarmament Commission has agreed on three substantive agenda items for the 1995 substantive session, as contained in document A/CN.10/1994/CRP.6/Rev.1, it may wish, as in the 1994 substantive session, to continue having three working groups to deal with these three subjects.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Disarmament Commission wishes to renew the following subsidiary bodies: first, the Committee of the Whole, which will deal informally with items 7 and 8, as well as any other relevant issues; secondly, Working Group I, which will deal with item 4, entitled "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons"; thirdly, Working Group II, which will deal with item 5, entitled "International arms transfers, with particular reference to resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991"; and, fourthly, Working Group III, which will deal with item 6, entitled "Review of the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade".

It was so decided.

The Chairman: Having renewed the mandates of its subsidiary bodies for the 1995 substantive session, the Commission may now wish to appoint the respective chairmen of the three Working Groups. The question at this stage is who will chair which Group.

In this connection, I should like to draw the attention of members of the Commission to the provision in section 4, paragraph 1 of the adopted document (A/CN.10/137), "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission", which reads, *inter alia*:

> "The allocation of the agenda items to the four subsidiary bodies and the appointment of chairmen for these subsidiary bodies should be decided at the organizational session of the Commission, taking into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution."

I am pleased to report that, as a result of extensive consultations between and within the five regional groups, taking into account the principle of rotation, the arrangements for the chairmanship of the three Working Groups in 1995 at this stage are as follows: the chairman of Working Group I, on "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons" should come from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, and the nominee will be duly appointed at the next plenary meeting of the Commission, in May 1995; Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann of Germany will chair Working Group II, on "International arms transfers, with particular reference to resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991"; the representative of Nigeria will chair Working Group III, on "Review of the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade", and the person designated will be duly appointed at the next plenary meeting of the Commission, in May.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I turn to the question of the date and duration of the 1995 substantive session.

As members will recall, at the last plenary meeting of the 1994 substantive session, on 9 May 1994, the Disarmament Commission decided the tentative dates and duration for the 1995 substantive session: from 15 May to 5 June, for a period of three weeks and one day — the same as in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994. That decision was made at the request of a number of delegations in order to facilitate the Conference on Disarmament's consideration of its schedule for 1995.

However, at our organizational session held on 1 December 1994 divergent views were expressed on the question of dates and duration of the 1995 substantive session. As a result of intensive consultations on this issue during the past four months, it was suggested that the duration of the 1995 substantive session of the Commission should be two weeks and one day, taking into account the extraordinary situation in the field of disarmament this year, including the convening of the Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Of course, the shortened duration should not constitute a precedent for the Disarmament Commission in considering the dates and duration of its future sessions.

This is the chair's general understanding at this stage.

If there are no comments or objections, the Disarmament Commission decides that its 1995 substantive session shall be held from 15 to 30 May 1995, noting that 29 May is a public holiday in New York.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: In order to facilitate the work of the next substantive session of the Commission, the Secretariat has prepared a draft general programme of work on the basis of the tentative dates agreed in May 1994. The draft has been distributed to the members of the Commission for consideration, as contained in document A/CN.10/1995/CRP.1. This programme is rather indicative and subject to change if necessary. In this regard, the Bureau will decide the exact weekly programme in due course at the 1995 substantive session.

Moreover, I should like to appeal to those delegations wishing to participate in the general exchange of views to make their statements on the first day of the 1995 substantive session — namely, 15 May — so that the Working Groups may commence their work without delay.

Are there any comments?

Mr. Akalovsky (United States): The draft does not reflect the understanding you, Mr. Chairman, have reached on the basis of consultations in the past several weeks, an understanding which was ratified today, that the duration of the session be only two weeks plus one day. So obviously it is necessary for this schedule to be modified. That is my first point.

My second point is to suggest strongly that perhaps, again because of the special circumstances obtaining this year, we should dispense with the general debate altogether. It seems to my delegation that we had a general

debate on arms transfers last year. Then we had a lengthy debate on nuclear disarmament, and there will be a long debate — of course, not everybody, unfortunately, will participate in it — in the NPT Review Conference. So it seems to us there is no real need to debate those items again this year.

As for the review of the Decade, that is an item which surely does not call for a debate. It seems to me we will have to sit down and work out a generally acceptable text, as was the case in 1985.

In this connection, I would like to note, as an indication of some optimism on our part, that in 1985 the item dealing with the review of the Decade was the only one agreed upon by the Commission, among the four or five we had at that time on the agenda. So, our hope is that not only this item will be agreed upon this year, but the other item scheduled for completion — namely, the nuclear disarmament item.

But I would renew my suggestion that we try to dispense with the general debate. I noted, Mr. Chairman, your appeal for delegations to speak on the first day, but, as we all know, practice has shown that people are usually not very eager to make their statements on the very first day, so we have a Monday, then I am afraid we will slip into Tuesday, inevitably, and we will lose two days, basically, for real work that we could do in our working groups. I hope that other representatives will look upon this suggestion with favour.

The Chairman: As to the first point raised by the representative of the United States, since the Disarmament Commission this afternoon adopted a reduced duration for the next substantive session, the general programme of work will be revised accordingly and delegations will have the revised programme of work at a later stage.

I wish also to draw attention to the fact that there is a specific proposal by the representative of the United States, that, in view of the special circumstances, the Disarmament Commission may wish to dispense with the general debate this year. I hope that we may hear comments, so that the Commission may decide how to deal with that proposal.

Mr. Hanif (Pakistan): As my colleague from the United States said, a few countries will not, unfortunately, be attending the comprehensive and exhaustive discussions on the NPT, and Pakistan is one of the unfortunate countries. So I endorse the proposal that, since we have reduced the duration by two weeks, we can dispense with the general debate and focus on the substantive work.

Mr. González Bustos (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): We feel that this is going to be an exceptional year, given the importance of the Review and Extension Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); however, we do believe that the Disarmament Commission will continue to be the only universal forum in which many delegations that are not part of the Conference on Disarmament will have the opportunity to express their views. In light of this, I would have difficulty with limiting those delegations' opportunities to do so. While accepting the arguments just put forward by the United States delegation, I think it would be appropriate for us to concentrate the general debate during the first two days of the session, and I think that that intention was duly conveyed to all delegations that we should hold the general debate and nothing but the general debate during those first two days and hence limit the general debate to those two days. I think that would leave it open for delegations who wish to do so to speak out on disarmament issues.

As I have mentioned, the Commission is still the only universal debating forum in which all delegations can participate.

Mr. Gajda (Hungary): My delegation is happy to note the progress we have achieved so far. We worked well and fast. There is only one small organizational question yet to decide. I call it organizational because there is no substance included in this question right now.

We have already had sufficient discussion on the three items adopted for this session, or we do not really need one. On nuclear disarmament, anything that could be said has been said, both in general and in detail, during the long years we have been tackling this problem. Immediately following the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, I doubt whether anyone will have anything new to say, whether it is a complete success, a complete failure or anything in between. Not much new can be offered, especially if the idea is to conclude the consideration of this item after several extensions.

Only last year we had a general discussion on the second item, but we must now concentrate on a down-to-earth drafting exercise on that item so that, hopefully, we can successfully conclude it in due course. We agree that on the third item there is practically no room for a general discussion. This is an item that has to be handled in a very

realistic and very practical manner. We count on the chairmanship offered by a delegation that initiated the consideration of this item, and we certainly hope that the representative of that delegation will conduct the kind of investigative research that he feels the substance merits.

I would submit, therefore, that, if we want to achieve something during this substantive session and not just waste our time hanging around waiting for someone to share a few general ideas, the suggestion of dispensing — on a very exceptional basis — with the so-called general exchange of views is not only wise, but, hopefully, will lead to some practical result.

Mr. Felico (Brazil): My delegation took a long time before agreeing to have a two-week period for this year's session. We would have preferred to have three weeks for the Disarmament Commission this year, but, in the spirit of compromise shared by everybody in the Commission, the delegation of Brazil agreed.

With regard to the matter under discussion — whether or not we should have a general debate — while agreeing that we should start working on substantive matters in the working groups and subsidiary bodies as soon as possible, my delegation would appeal to you, Sir, as Chairman, to find ways to allow those who wish to participate in what might be called a general debate to do so. The delegation of Brazil will not be able to speak during the NPT Conference, for reasons that everyone knows, and I guess that we will certainly have a good number of speeches in the pipeline to be delivered after that Conference is finished. My delegation would therefore like the opportunity to remain open to speak in the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Wiranataatmadja (Indonesia): My delegation agrees that at the next substantive session of the Disarmament Commission we shall face special circumstances because of the very long NPT Review and Extension Conference. However, my delegation also feels that, due to the nature of this body and its importance to Member States that are not Parties to the NPT, after the NPT has been reviewed it would perhaps be good for us to have the opportunity to express ourselves on this item.

First of all, this item should be concluded this year, we hope, but in the light of negotiations during the Conference, it might be useful for us to explore the possibility of making something valuable as a result of the Conference.

In short, I would like to suggest, perhaps as a middle way, that we follow your suggestion, Sir, that we have a one-day general debate to allow the delegations concerned to express their views on very important matters, especially on the nuclear item.

Mr. Rivero Rosario (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship.

My delegation is pleased to see that we have finally been able to arrive at an agreement on a set of issues; this most certainly required an effort on everyone's part, including from my own delegation, concerning the items on the agenda and the duration of the session. On the question of the general debate, my delegation has listened to the various points of view expressed here and feels that, despite the fact that the debate at the Review and Extension Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will enable us to expand on nuclear matters, we do not necessarily need to dispense with the debate within our Commission.

As we all well know, many representatives of Member States, but not all, will speak at the NPT Conference: I believe that there has been no agreement at the end of the day from some members that non-party States can state their points of view orally. Therefore, I am sure that it would be interesting to hear the views of those who wish to speak in our body both on the nuclear issue, once the NPT Conference is over, and on other issues.

My delegation would like to suggest, though, that we should make two appeals: firstly, for people to arrive punctually every day so that we can make the best use of our limited time, and secondly, for delegations to study the possibility of keeping their statements during our debate short or, as has occasionally been suggested, that they make just a presentation of perhaps a minute and then circulate the full texts of what they intended to say on a given subject if they so desire. I feel that by so doing we would be able to satisfy those delegations, such as my own, which feel that a debate is useful but at the same time want to adjust to the exceptional and short duration of this year's session.

Mr. Hellbeck (Germany): I should like to associate myself with the very useful suggestions made by the representatives of Indonesia and Cuba. I feel it is necessary to exercise some self-restraint, and I fully support their suggestions.

I wish to raise just one additional point regarding something we have discussed at every session of the Disarmament Commission over the past years: the question of whether or not there should be parallel meetings of the subsidiary working groups. Given that we have only two weeks this year, we may have to face the possibility of holding parallel meetings of the working groups in order to accomplish the progress we all desire. I feel that I can say this on behalf of Ambassador Hoffman, in his capacity as Chairman of the Working Group on international arms transfers. It is his sincere wish and desire to achieve substantive progress in that Working Group.

I would just like to flag the fact that this might result in the issue of parallel working groups coming up once again. Obviously, these matters will have to be addressed and decided nearer the beginning of the session, but, since we are talking about details of the organization of work, I did not want to miss this opportunity to flag this point.

The Chairman: Since we have heard a number of delegations flagging their willingness to speak in the general exchange of views during the substantive session, may I, as Chairman, suggest that we could probably have two meetings for the general exchange of views, and delegations wishing to make statements in the general exchange of views would do so on the first day of the substantive session, 15 May.

Mr. Akalovsky (United States of America): It certainly was not my personal intention, or that of my delegation, to stifle debate or to silence those who want to speak on certain subjects. But it seems to me that delegations would have an opportunity to speak on the subjects on the agenda within the working groups anyway; they can express their views. But if there is a general desire to have a day devoted to general statements, I would certainly not stand in the way. But it seems to me that in that case, Sir, we should follow your suggestion strictly: only one day, and those who did not speak on the first day just would not speak.

The representative of Cuba made an interesting and useful suggestion: that statements be limited to a very short time — a minute — and then a text be distributed. I do not think one minute will suffice for most people. In the United States Congress, there are "one-minute" speeches that sometimes last five minutes, even though the Chairman bangs the gavel and says "Your time has expired".

But, on a more serious note, it seems to me that if everybody exercises self-restraint, as pointed out by our colleague from Brazil, then perhaps we could devote one day to the general debate for those who may want to speak on the subjects on the agenda. But, if we say only one day, I think you, Sir, ought to be strict about it.

The Chairman: Do delegations agree with the Chair's suggestion that we have one day — the first day of the substantive session — devoted to the general exchange of views? If the Disarmament Commission agrees to that procedure, we will certainly try to stick to it as much as possible. "As much as possible" does not mean, of course, that I will be inclined to have a second day of general exchange of views.

If I hear no comments on, or objections to, this suggestion, I shall take it that members agree.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I appeal to all representatives who wish to make statements in the general exchange of views to make them on 15 May, the first day of the session. I would also ask all delegations to be punctual — not like today, when we had to wait 45 minutes for delegations to arrive and start our meeting. This will not be the case during the substantive session.

With regard to the question, raised by the representative of Germany, of parallel working group meetings: first, the Bureau has to consider that matter, and the respective chairmen of the working groups will have to come up with their own specific timetables as to what they wish to have during the substantive meetings. After the Bureau considers that issue I suppose that it will be able to come up with a timetable that will not hurt any groups — especially those small delegations that do not have many people here in New York to participate in those meetings — and will allow the widest possible participation. The Bureau and the Chair will certainly bear that in mind when we consider the programme of work.

I repeat that the draft general programme of work distributed this afternoon will be revised to show that work will have to be compressed into two weeks and one day.

Other business

The Chairman: I now call on the Secretary of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. Lin (Secretary of the Disarmament Commission): At its forty-ninth session, in 1994, the General Assembly

adopted resolution 49/75 B, entitled "Review of the Declaration of the 1990s as the Third Disarmament Decade". In operative paragraph 5 of that resolution, the General Assembly

> "*Requests* Member States to submit to the Secretary-General their views and suggestions on such a review no later than 30 April 1995".

Accordingly, on behalf of the Secretary-General, the Centre for Disarmament Affairs dispatched a note verbale (CDA/5-95/TDD) in early March to request Member States to provide their views and suggestions on this matter by 30 April so that the Secretariat could prepare a compilation of those views and suggestions prior to the 1995 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission in order to facilitate the work of Working Group III on this subject. Therefore, it is the wish of the Secretariat to receive the response of the Member States on this matter in due time.

Closure of the session

The Chairman: I would like to thank all delegations for their active participation.

I declare the organizational session of the Disarmament Commission closed.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.